



Kentucky Invests in Developing Success

## Kentucky's Early Childhood Initiative Summary

In order to reach the goal that all young children in Kentucky are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their communities, 25% of Kentucky's Phase I Tobacco Settlement dollars will fund the early childhood initiative.

### *Assuring Maternal and Child Health*

**Healthy Babies Campaign:** To plan and implement a public awareness / education campaign to educate the public about fetal alcohol syndrome, the impact of substance abuse on pregnancy and childrearing, the importance of smoking cessation, and about healthy lifestyle choices that help babies to be born healthy. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley - 502/564-8341.

**Folic Acid Campaign:** To prevent the high incidence of Neural Tube Defects (also known as spina bifida or open spine) in Kentucky by providing access to the B vitamin Folic Acid, a known preventive measure. **FACT:** Kentucky's rate of neural tube defects is 1 1/2 times the national average. An estimated 70% of such birth defects are preventable through the administration of folic acid in the early prenatal period. Based on Kentucky's incidence of neural tube defects and the average lifetime cost associated with the condition, the annual cost to Kentuckians is estimated to be \$55 million dollars annually. Contact: Dr. Steve Davis – 502/564-4830 or Sandy Cleveland – 502/564-2154.

**Substance Abuse Treatment Program for Pregnant and Post-partum Women:** To assist women with current or prior substance abuse problems to bear healthy babies and to remain free of substance abuse behaviors in the future and to provide prevention services. Contact: Mike Townsend or Elisa Klein - 502/564-2880

**Universal Newborn Hearing Screening:** To screen all newborns prior to hospital discharge. **FACT:** At the rate of 3:1000 births, hearing difficulties are the most common sensory birth defect. Early detection and appropriate tracking and follow-up are vital to the development of the child. The cost of educating a deaf child in a residential program is approximately \$27,000 as compared to \$6000 annually for the child who is diagnosed early and served in a typical classroom. Contact: Michelle King – 502/595-4459 ext. 323 and 877-757-4237 or Eric Friedlander – 502/595-4459 ext. 271.

**Immunization Program for Underinsured Children:** To achieve 100% immunization coverage by age three. **FACT:** Currently 17% of children ages birth to three years old are underinsured. The purchase of vaccines to cover this population of children who are non-Medicaid and non-KCHIP eligible will increase access to immunizations. Contact: Dr. Steve Davis 502/564-4830 or Victor Negron – 502/564-7243

**Eye Examinations For Children:** To require all children to submit evidence of an eye examination (not a screening) no later than Jan. 1 of the first year of public school entry. **FACT:** Screening alone often misses visual difficulties such as amblyopia which have the potential for reversal if diagnosed and treated before the age of five. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley – 502/564-8341, Terry Vance – 502/564-3678, Eric Friedlander – 502/595-4459 ext. 271, or Jackie Ferguson – 800/232-1160.

**Oral Health Education and Prevention Program:** To prevent early childhood caries (ECC) through: (1) targeted early screening,, (2) oral health education of caregivers, (3) application of a fluoride varnish to primary teeth (baby) if necessary, and (4) proper referral to a dentist if appropriate for care. **FACT:** ECC is highly preventable and at an affordable cost. From the 2001 Kentucky Children's Oral Health Survey, nearly one-third of a sample of 2-4 year olds was affected by ECC. Rehabilitation of severe ECC can be more than \$5,000. Contact: Dr. Jim Cecil – 502/564-3246.

### *Supporting Families*

**HANDS Home Visiting Program:** To provide a voluntary home visitation program for first time parents who are at-risk in order to promote the healthy growth and development of the child. **FACT:** The highest number of reported child abuse cases (43%) involves children four years old and younger. In evaluations of multiple home visiting programs, participating children exhibited enhanced levels of health and development. Contact: Dr. Steve Davis – 502/564-4830 or Brenda Chandler – 502/564-2154.

**Early Childhood Mental Health Program:** To provide mental health consultation for early childhood programs, assessment and therapeutic services for young children and their families. Personnel will be trained to deliver age appropriate services. **FACT:** It is estimated that one of every 10 children and adolescents has a mental health challenge. Contact: Dr. Steve Davis 502/564-4830, Mary Beth Jackson - 502/564-3527 or Beth Armstrong -502/564-4448.

**Children's Advocacy Centers:** To provide medical examinations for sexually abused children. To implement a statewide medical examination program including telehealth and specialized physician training. **FACT:** In FY 2000, over 3,600 children were served annually by Children's Advocacy Centers, and over 1000 medical exams are provided. Medical examinations are necessary to mitigate the physical and mental health impact of abuse of these children. Contact: Carol E. Jordan, M.S. 502/564-2611.

### ***Enhancing Early Care and Education***

**Access to Child Care Subsidy:** To increase the reimbursement to childcare centers and licensed family daycare homes who provide care to low-income families by increasing the percentage of eligible children. **FACT:** By increasing the eligibility from 160% of the federal poverty level to 170% FPL, an estimated 12,000 *additional* children will be covered by eligibility guidelines thereby increasing access to care for low-income families. Contact: Mike Cheek – 502/564-2524

**STARS for KIDS NOW:** A voluntary quality rating system to raise the level of quality in child care by offering a system of incentives and rewards based on identified characteristics associated with positive outcomes for children and families and by offering technical assistance to achieve quality indicators. **FACT:** Children cared for in high quality settings performed significantly better in math, language, and social skills at school entrance than did their peers in programs of poor quality, according to a study published by the University of North Carolina. Contact: Dr. Mary Howard – 502/564-8341 or Amy Stiber – 502/564-2800.

**Scholarship Fund for Child Care Providers:** To provide a scholarship fund, administered through the Ky. Higher Education Assistance Authority, to those who work in child care at least 20 hours per week. The funds assist personnel in moving through a credentialing system that begins at entry level and proceeds through post-secondary education. **FACT:** Quality of child care is closely associated with the education and training levels of the child care providers. Early care and education personnel are among the most poorly paid individuals in the workforce and therefore need assistance and incentive to increase their educational achievement and to permit workers to move up the career ladder in early childhood. Contact: Albert Fox – 502/564-8341.

**Increased Licensing Personnel:** To increase the number of licensing personnel dedicated specifically to child care who will bring expertise to upgrade child care quality by having smaller caseloads consisting only of child care facilities. **FACT:** 1999 caseloads averaged 100 facilities per worker (exceeding national standard of 50 facilities) and included facilities other than child care. High case numbers preclude anything but monitoring for compliance with minimal standards and leave no time for assessing quality. Few workers have backgrounds in early childhood. Contact: Mike Cheek – 502/564-2524 or Amy Stiber – 502/564-2800.

**Healthy Start in Childcare:** To provide personnel to train child care providers and parents in health, safety, nutrition, and the benefits of early intervention and the importance of children's social/emotional well being. **FACT:** There are approximately 2,040 licensed childcare facilities in Kentucky and 814 certified family day care homes that will benefit from assistance to upgrade health and safety conditions and staff/parent training. Contact: Dr. Steve Davis–502/564-4830 or Sue Bell–502/564-3527.

**Community Early Childhood Council Funding:** To assist agencies and individuals, identified in legislation, in forming community councils to improve the lives of children and families. **FACT:** Approximately 103,000 of Kentucky's young children are in childcare. According to national standards, much of Kentucky's childcare is judged to be of poor quality and yet providers often cannot afford the expense associated with increasing quality. Funding through councils will offer seed money to make needed improvement. Contact: Angie DeHart 502/564-8341.

**First Steps: Kentucky's Early Intervention System:** To serve children from birth to age 3 who have a developmental delay or a particular medical condition that is known to cause a developmental delay. **FACT:** The First Steps program is increasing approximately 20% annually. Last year over 9800 children were served at an average cost of \$4,000 per child. Contact Eric Friedlander – 502/595-4459 ext. 271.

### ***Establishing the Support Structure***

**Early Childhood Development Authority:** To receive and disburse funds and to coordinate the development of programs supported by the funds. The Early Childhood Development Authority merges four Councils for efficient coordination of issues related to early childhood. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley – 502/564-8341.

**Business Council:** To involve the corporate community and local governments in supporting issues of importance to working families in Kentucky. The Business Council is composed of business and community leaders who have demonstrated an interest in early childhood and families in the workplace. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley – 502/564-8341.

**Professional Development Council:** To work with existing entities to create a seamless system of education and training for early childhood providers, beginning with an entry level credential and proceeding through a Master's degree. Contact: Nancy Newberry – 502/564-8341.

**Evaluation of Initiative:** To ensure effective use of funds in achieving targeted outcomes across settings statewide. Contact: Dr. Kim Townley – 502/564-8341.

### ***Program Improvements***

**Training:** Requires the Cabinet for Families and Children to set training requirements for all providers of childcare who receive a state childcare subsidy. Contact: Mike Cheek-502/564-2524.

**Child Safety in Childcare:** Allows the Cabinet for Families and Children (through Cabinet for Health Services Office of Inspector General) to assess penalties to facilities when an inspector finds a situation that poses an immediate threat to the health, safety, or welfare of children. In addition to a hearing, an informal dispute resolution process is established prior to an action that could result in the closure of a childcare facility. Contact: Mike Cheek-502/564-2524.